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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 TASHKENT 001908

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, EXBS (J. HARTSHORN), INL (A. BUHLER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOU EXPRESSES INTEREST IN FURTHER BORDER SECURITY COOPERATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The first bilateral border security assistance working groups met November 1. The GOU's delegation repeatedly expressed its desire for improved border security cooperation with the United States. GOU representatives from the MFA, Border Guards of the National Security Service (NSS), and Customs were grateful for U.S. assistance and assured the U.S. delegation that they were using the equipment they had received for the purposes intended. They provided no new proposals. They hoped to return to previous levels of border security cooperation and build on this in the future. The GOU representatives requested further information in writing on information-sharing and the modalities of cooperation. The GOU side made it clear it would have to brief senior GOU officials on the U.S. proposals. We expect that this will take time, but we are hopeful that we can come to a satisfactory agreement addressing our concerns. The GOU agreed to meet in one month and follow-up on some specific issues raised. Their future participation in these sessions will indicate how serious they are about cooperation. Something good has come out of the EXBS local employee incident. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On November 1, the first bilateral meetings of the Cooperation Working Group and Modalities Working Group on border security took place at the MFA's opulent reception house. The Deputy Chief of Mission chaired the US delegation, which also included the head of Embassy Tashkent's Defense Threat Reduction Office, the Defense Attaché, two poloffs responsible for the EXBS and INL programs, and two interpreters. The head of MFA's Americas Desk, Ismat Faizullaev, chaired the 19-member, mostly mid-level GOU delegation. This consisted primarily of Border Guards from the National Security Service and a representative from Customs.

¶3. (SBU) Faizullaev opened the working groups with an expression of hope that these fora would serve to rebuild trust. He stated the GOU reacted favorably to the USG's decision to resume border security assistance. DCM reminded all of our shared national interests in securing Uzbekistan's borders against terrorists, trafficked persons, narcotics, and WMD. In the past, border security cooperation had been quite successful. It had been a highlight of our bilateral relationship and could be again. In order to move on, it was

useful to review the array of past joint projects and what they had achieved in Uzbekistan. The U.S. side then presented four Powerpoint presentations in Russian (English versions forwarded to SCA/CEN) summarizing more than \$85 million of projects and programs with ten GOU partner agencies, most particularly the Border Guards and Customs Service, since 1999.

REACTIONS TO EXBS, INL, DTRA, AND DATT BORDER PRESENTATIONS

14. (SBU) Starting with the poloff responsible for the EXBS program, the U.S. side gave presentations on all of the border security programs the USG is responsible for in Uzbekistan. Faizullaev expressed regret that the planned EXBS nonproliferation event at the University of Georgia for Uzbek officials had not taken place, but he understood the reason for this. (Comment: An oblique reference to the incident involving our EXBS employee and its aftermath. End Comment.) The DCM announced that, pending an agreement on the modalities of cooperation, the U.S. is ready to move forward on three EXBS projects: the export control/nonproliferation event at the University of Georgia, the provision of ten radioisotope detectors to Uzbekistan's Customs, and the repair of an X-ray van for Customs. Faizullaev stated that the GOU will consider these projects, and will inform the U.S. of its decision. He also said that EXBS-provided equipment has been used daily. Mr. Reyimov from the National Border Protection Department reassured the U.S. delegation that the GOU was making use of the equipment as intended and that this was operational. He also hoped for further cooperation in this area.

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15. (SBU) Poloff briefed on the INL program, including the active INL project at the Ministry of Health and the provision of equipment to Customs, and the INL-funded and UNODC-implemented project at Termez Civil River Port and the Border Liaison Offices project on the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The DCM recounted a previous project facilitating communications between Uzbek and Afghan border guards at Hayraton. Faizullaev stated that the GOU will consider the U.S. proposals.

16. (SBU) The head of the Defense Threat Reduction Office briefed on the WMD-PPI, including the installation of 27 Radiation Portal Monitors at 27 international Ports of Entry (POE) in Uzbekistan and the requirement for continued access to the POEs for periodic maintenance by both DTRA and DOE contractors. The representative from Customs expressed gratitude for the assistance and equipment, and stated that Customs is making effective use of the equipment provided by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

17. (SBU) The Defense Attaché briefed on border security cooperation under CENTCOM, including a plan outlining proposed activities requiring near reciprocity from the GOU and previous FMF and FMS cases. The cost for the delivery of the Border Guards patrol boats was \$2.9 million, and training had been delayed due to problems with visas. A joint inquiry and pre-deployment site survey is to be conducted in Termez November 8-9. Training has been scheduled for December. He also spoke about Border Patrol and Customs exchanges, a counternarcotics terrorism exercise, a special operations information exchange, a search and rescue exchange, and several Marshall Center Courses. Faizullaev said that the Marshall Programs looked very interesting and that the GOU will participate in them, and also noted that he was one of the first participants in the Marshall Program in 1994.

18. (SBU) Reyimov reiterated that all of the training and equipment the U.S. has provided is being used appropriately, and noted that Uzbekistan's accomplishments in border security would have been impossible without the cooperation of the United States. He stressed that the GOU hopes for

further cooperation with the United States in the future, and emphasized that this is the government's official position.

REACTIONS TO ACCESS, RESPONSIVENESS, ACCOUNTABILITY CONCERNS

¶9. (SBU) The U.S. delegation outlined several issues that need to be resolved. The U.S. has had problems with access including visa problems for visiting experts, difficulties--especially for DTRA--in accessing POEs, and is concerned about the lack of business registration renewal for Washington International, Inc. which implements WMD-PPI DTRA activities in Uzbekistan. Faizullaev responded that they could not give an answer then, but repeatedly assured the U.S. delegation that their group would brief higher authorities on these issues. He also promised that the GOU would take steps to improve the situation regarding visas. He asked that the USG have visa applicants apply well in advance of intended travel. The DCM then brought up the issue of responsiveness and timeliness of response. In the past, the United States had offered suggestions or proposals that the GOU did not respond to for long periods of time. He noted communications have improved in recent months but timeliness of response was still an issue. The Defense Attaché raised an immediate case in point. DCM proposed we work together to find ways to communicate more effectively and more often. Lastly, the U.S. delegation brought up the issue of accountability for equipment, noting the Congressionally-mandated accounting requirements. Faizullaev and Reyimov both assured the representatives that they respect these requirements and that Uzbekistan would "play by the rules." (Comment: Uzbekistan has an excellent record with regard to end-use monitoring. End Comment.)

GOU WILL CONSIDER A SUBGROUP ON BTRP

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¶10. (SBU) The U.S. delegation then addressed a recent U.S. proposal to review issues related to DTRA's Biological Threat Reduction Program, and suggested that either the working groups take biological threat issues into account or that a separate subgroup be established to focus on these. The head of the Defense Threat Reduction Office also stated that a routine high-level meeting would serve our mutual interests. Faizullaev indicated that they would submit the proposal to senior government officials, but he favored the establishment of a subgroup because additional people with responsibility for these issues would be needed from other GOU ministries than the ones represented in the current working groups.

LET'S RETURN TO OUR PAST LEVEL OF COOPERATION

¶11. (SBU) In response to a question on the GOU's priority needs, Faizullaev noted that they have opinions and ideas on various projects, and pledged that they would send the USG something in writing after they brief their superiors. He said they needed time to think it over. Faizullaev stated that they wished to revive, to return to the previous level of engagement, and then both sides could build on this in the future. Mr. Reyimov affirmed Faizullaev's statement, and said that these meetings help to instill a spirit of cooperation among the Uzbek representatives present, about 90% of whom did not have prior experience with international cooperation. Faizullaev agreed to hold another meeting in roughly one month, and said that the GOU was open to suggestions from the United States.

MODALITIES--SEND US YOUR PROPOSALS IN WRITING

¶12. (SBU) The U.S. delegation then brought up the issue of information-sharing on conceiving projects, implementing projects, and monitoring the results. The DCM stated that we

did not want to violate GOU laws and rules on information-sharing and that we wanted to know the procedures to prevent misunderstandings. Information-sharing was essential for effective project design, efficient project implementation, and accurate project monitoring and assessment. The DTRA representative acknowledged that some of the information on the GOU side may be considered sensitive, and we respected that. For this reason, almost a year ago OSD had proposed an agreement on information-sharing. Faizullaev requested a copy of the previous proposal on information-sharing. Spelling out the absolute necessity of contractors and Embassy local staff in implementing joint cooperation programs, the DCM spoke about the importance of reaching a common understanding on how contractors and local staff interact with GOU officials. In order to avoid problems in the future and to communicate better, we needed to come to some basic agreement on the parameters and acceptable means of interacting. DCM proposed the working group look at all the various ways our contractors and local employees interact with GOU officials; visits to projects; proposed project sites and facilities; and the issue of escorting GOU officials on international study trips. Faizullaev responded that the GOU would think about this. He requested the U.S. side to provide in writing additional proposals in this area. DCM agreed to do so.

COMMENT:

¶13. (SBU) Something positive is emerging from the EXBS local employee incident. We are off to a good start in reestablishing a dialogue on border security cooperation with the GOU and in restoring some trust and transparency. The GOU delegation listened to our remarks attentively. While they expressed interest in further cooperation on border security, our specific proposals will need approval from senior levels of the GOU before we can expect much further progress. This may take some time. Nevertheless, we are cautiously optimistic that we can come to an agreement on modalities with the GOU that will enable us to move forward on a number of projects. GOU participation in subsequent

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meetings of the bilateral working groups and their actions in resolving some of the specific issues raised will indicate how serious it is about restoring our previous level of cooperation in border security.

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